

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
BEFORE THE MICHIGAN JUDICIAL TENURE COMMISSION

COMPLAINT AGAINST:

**HON. STEVEN FORD**

**FORMAL COMPLAINT NO. 74**

Judge, 92<sup>nd</sup> District Court  
100 S. Marley St.  
St. Ignace, MI 49781

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**COMPLAINT**

The Michigan Judicial Tenure Commission (“Commission”) files this complaint against Hon. Steven Ford (“Respondent”), 92<sup>nd</sup> District Court Judge, serving the counties of Luce and Mackinac, in the cities of Newberry and St. Ignace, Michigan. This action is taken pursuant to the authority of the Commission under Article 6, Section 30 of the Michigan Constitution of 1963, as amended and MCR 9.200 *et seq.* The filing of this Complaint has been authorized and directed by resolution of the Commission.

Respondent is, and at all material times was, a judge of the 92<sup>nd</sup> District Court in Luce and Mackinac Counties, Michigan. As a judge, he is subject to all the duties and responsibilities imposed on him by the Michigan Supreme Court, and is subject to the standards for discipline set forth in MCR 9.104 and MCR 9.205. Respondent is charged with violating his judicial and professional duties as set forth in the following paragraphs.

1. Respondent at all relevant times has been a judge of the 92<sup>nd</sup> District Court, Luce and Mackinac Counties, Michigan.

2. Respondent has engaged in a pattern of sexual harassment of female court employees, and has utilized court computer equipment to view pornographic material on the Internet, which constitute acts of misconduct under the Michigan Constitution, Code of Judicial Conduct, and Michigan Court Rules.

**Count I**  
**SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Magistrate Judy St. Louis

3. In late 2001 or early 2002, Mackinac County District Court Magistrate Judy St. Louis approached Respondent for counseling, as she had done in the past, as Respondent is also an Episcopalian minister.

4. Magistrate St. Louis discussed the fact that her fiancé was not affectionate with her during a trip to Atlantic City, and was more intent on keeping to a schedule he had established for the vacation.

5. Respondent replied by stating that if he was dating Magistrate St. Louis and was on vacation with her, he would never want to leave the hotel room, and would stay in bed and make love to her all day long.

6. In May 2002, Magistrate Judy St. Louis, who typically worked in Mackinac County, served as a replacement court recorder in Lapeer County.

7. At the end of the day, Respondent approached Magistrate St. Louis to thank her for assisting him in court.

8. Respondent bent over so he was face-to-face with her, and stated, "I really want to thank you."

9. Respondent kissed Magistrate St. Louis on her lips, and he left the room.

10. Approximately three weeks to one month later, while Respondent was working in Mackinac County, Magistrate St. Louis went into his office to obtain his signature on some civil judgments.

11. Respondent left his chair, walked around his desk, and grabbed Magistrate St. Louis around her waist.

12. Respondent then pulled her toward him, kissed her on her lips, and returned to his seat.

13. Approximately two weeks later, Respondent approached Magistrate St. Louis while she was in her office.

14. He made inquiries about her personal life, including her relationship with her fiancé, and began rubbing her shoulders and neck.

15. Respondent eventually began discussing a court file, but then bent down so he was face-to-face with Magistrate St. Louis, and kissed her on her lips.

16. Respondent resumed his conversation regarding the court file and left her office.

17. In December 2002, Magistrate St. Louis was standing at a computer when Respondent approached her from behind, pressed his body against hers so that his pelvis rested against the back and side of her body, and grabbed her buttocks.

18. After conducting a brief conversation with Magistrate St. Louis for approximately 20 seconds, with his body against her and his hand on her buttocks the entire time, he walked away from her.

19. In the morning of Wednesday, January 8, 2003, Magistrate St. Louis was in her office speaking to an attorney on the telephone when Respondent entered her office.

20. When she placed the attorney on hold to obtain an item from another office, Respondent stood up and would not let her get around him.

21. Respondent grabbed Magistrate St. Louis, pulled her toward him, and kissed her on the lips.

22. Respondent then allowed her to retrieve the item she needed from the other office and walked away.

23. In the afternoon of Wednesday, January 8, 2003, Magistrate St. Louis was working in her office.

24. Respondent entered and began giving her instructions regarding a work assignment.

25. He then turned the conversation to a personal matter concerning alleged relationship problems Magistrate St. Louis had with her fiancé, and the fact that she had called off her wedding.

26. Respondent stated, "If we were in a hot tub, I would be licking and kissing you all over."

27. As he made that comment, Respondent rubbed Magistrate St. Louis's breasts for approximately five seconds.

28. None of Respondent's actions directed toward Magistrate St. Louis were invited or welcomed by her.

29. On or around April 30, 2003, Respondent was charged with 4<sup>th</sup> degree criminal sexual conduct as to his actions regarding Magistrate St. Louis under MCL 750.520e, which is a two-year high misdemeanor.

30. Respondent was also charged with common law misconduct in office for physically assaulting Magistrate St. Louis while serving in a publicly elected office as a district court judge, which is a felony under MCL 750.505.

Marion Danielson

31. Marion Danielson is Respondent's court recorder for both Mackinac County and Luce County.

32. Approximately four to five years ago, Respondent first touched or grabbed Ms Danielson's buttocks.

33. As time passed, the incidence of touching or grabbing Ms Danielson's buttocks increased to at least once a week.

34. In the summer of 2002, Respondent approached Ms Danielson and grabbed her buttocks when he was alone with her in his courtroom.

35. In late 2002 or early 2003, Ms Danielson entered Respondent's office to discuss a work-related matter.

36. During the conversation, Respondent suddenly pulled Ms Danielson onto his lap, and held her down so she could not get up.

37. Respondent placed his arms around her mid-section and squeezed as she struggled to get away from him.

38. After between 5 and 30 seconds, Ms Danielson was able to pull away from Respondent.

39. In late February or early March 2003, Respondent was walking in the hallway of the second floor of the Mackinac County Building with Ms Danielson.

40. As he walked down the hallway, his hand was on her buttocks the entire time, and continued to be there while he accompanied Ms Danielson into her office.

41. On one other occasion where the date is uncertain, Respondent approached Ms Danielson from behind and stood with his body against hers, so that he was straddling her leg and his pelvis was pressing against her side and buttocks.

42. None of Respondent's actions directed toward Ms Danielson were invited or welcomed by her.

43. On or around April 30, 2003, Respondent was charged with common law misconduct in office for physically assaulting Ms Danielson while serving in a publicly-elected office as a district court judge, which is a felony under MCL 750.505.

44. The conduct described in paragraphs 3 through 43, if true, constitutes:
- (a) Misconduct in office as defined by Michigan Constitution 1963, Article 6, §30 as amended, and MCR 9.205;
  - (b) Conduct clearly prejudicial to the administration of justice as defined by the Michigan Constitution 1963, Article 6, §30 as amended, and MCR 9.205;
  - (c) Discourteous or disrespectful treatment of a person because of gender or other protected personal characteristic, in violation of MCR 9.205(B)(1)(d);

- (d) Failure to observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved as described in the Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 1;
- (e) Conduct involving impropriety and the appearance of impropriety, which erodes public confidence in the judiciary, contrary to the Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 2A;
- (f) Failure to respect and observe the law and to conduct oneself at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary, contrary to the Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 2B;
- (g) Failure to treat court employees fairly and respectfully, without regard to gender, in violation of the Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 2B; and
- (h) Conduct violating MCR 9.104 in that it:
  - (1) Is prejudicial to the administration of justice, contrary to MCR 9.104(1);
  - (2) Exposes the legal profession or courts to obloquy, contempt, censure or reproach, contrary to MCR 9.104(2);
  - (3) Is contrary to ethics, honesty, and good morals, contrary to MCR 9.104(3);
  - (4) Violates standards or rules of professional responsibility adopted by the Supreme Court, contrary to MCR 9.104(4); and
  - (5) Violates criminal laws of the State of Michigan, contrary to MCR 9.104(5).



**Count II**  
**MISUSE OF COURT COMPUTER EQUIPMENT**

45. Respondent has use of a computer at the Mackinac County District Court.

46. The computer is provided by the court and is the only one in the court that has access to the Internet.

47. The computer is county and/or court property that is used exclusively by Respondent.

48. In March 2003, Magistrate St. Louis entered Respondent's office when his back was turned, and he was using the computer.

49. She observed Respondent viewing pornographic material on his computer.

50. For at least two years, Respondent has restricted Internet access via that computer to himself through a password that restricts access to him, and through instructions to the court staff that no one may use the computer other than himself.

51. The Hi-Tech Crime Unit of the Michigan Attorney General's Office conducted a forensic review of the hard drive in that computer.

52. The investigation revealed that Respondent's computer had been used to access pornographic web sites and download pornographic materials.

53. The conduct described in paragraphs 45 through 52, if true, constitutes:

- (a) Misconduct in office as defined by Michigan Constitution 1963, Article 6, §30 as amended, and MCR 9.205;
- (b) Conduct clearly prejudicial to the administration of justice as defined by the Michigan Constitution 1963, Article 6, §30 as amended, and MCR 9.205;
- (c) Failure to observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary may be preserved as described in the Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 1;
- (d) Conduct involving impropriety and the appearance of impropriety, which erodes public confidence in the judiciary, contrary to the Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 2A;
- (e) Failure to conduct oneself at all times in a manner the promotes public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary, contrary to the Code of Judicial Conduct, Canon 2B; and
- (f) Conduct violating MCR 9.104 in that it:
  - (1) Is prejudicial to the administration of justice, contrary to MCR 9.104(1);
  - (2) Exposes the legal profession or courts to obloquy, contempt, censure or reproach, contrary to MCR 9.104(2);
  - (3) Is contrary to ethics, honesty, and good morals, contrary to MCR 9.104(3); and

- (4) Violates standards or rules of professional responsibility adopted by the Supreme Court, contrary to MCR 9.104(4).

Pursuant to MCR 9.209(B), Respondent is advised that an original verified answer to the foregoing complaint, and nine copies thereof, must be filed with the Commission within 14 days after service upon Respondent of the Complaint. Such answer shall be in a form similar to the answer in a civil action in a circuit court and shall contain a full and fair disclosure of all the facts and circumstances pertaining to Respondent's alleged misconduct. The willful concealment, misrepresentation, or failure to file such answer and disclosure shall be additional grounds for disciplinary action under the complaint.

JUDICIAL TENURE COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN  
3034 W. Grand Boulevard, Suite 8-450  
Detroit, MI 48202

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Paul J. Fischer (P 35454)  
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Associate Examiner

Dated: September 2, 2003

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